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SUBJECT: MINUSTAH SAYS IT BROKERS EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATURE
AGREEMENT IN INTEREST OF HAITI'S POLITICAL STABILITY

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1329

Classified By: (U) Charge d'Affaires Thomas C. Tighe 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

11. (C) MINUSTAH reported to Embassy August 16 that it brokered an agreement between President Preval and leaders of the Haitian legislature August 14 that commits leaders of the two branches of government to meet monthly to discuss differences and improve cooperation. The agreement followed the July 31 vote of no confidence (and subsequent resignation) of Minister of Culture Daniel Elie. Parliamentary leaders agreed to shelve plans to challenge and possibly vote out of office three additional ministers, while the President committed to channel additional funding to municipalities. The agreement shows President Preval realizing he cannot govern over the heads of the legislature, despite his continuing private disdain for many deputies. If adhered to -- by no means a foregone conclusion -- the agreement could advance political stability in Haiti and help Preval implement his programs. End Summary.

Agreement to Meet Monthly

12. (C) POL Section Chief paid an introductory courtesy call August 16 on MINUSTAH Deputy Director of Political Affairs Lizbeth Cullity (protect throughout). Cullity noted that following the July 31 vote of no-confidence in Minister of Culture Elie and that minister's resignation, MINUSTAH got word that parliamentary group leaders were contemplating similar political assaults on three additional ministers, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Clerisme. Hoping to head off a confrontation, SRSG Mulet invited President Preval and parliamentary group leaders to a meeting. That August 14 conclave produced agreement between Preval and parliamentary leaders that the latter would not pursue the three additional ministers, and that the President and parliamentary leaders would meet monthly to discuss their differences. The President also agreed to increase funding for municipalities (Note: this is a key issue for pork-hungry parliamentarians. The Chamber's ouster of Elie was largely motivated by that Minister's refusal to allocate funds for carnival celebrations in members' constituencies (reftel) - End note).

13. (C) Cullity considered the agreement a big step forward in executive-legislative relations, and an intelligent and necessary move by President Preval, who privately disdains the constituency politicking of many parliamentarians.

Preval now appears to understand that ignoring the legislature will imperil his cabinet and his overall political program.

14. (C) Cullity hoped the agreement would hold until parliament went into recess in mid-September, which would give Preval and his government breathing room until the legislature reconvenes in early January. She feared, however, that in the month remaining before the recess, deputies might attack Minister of Public Works Frantz Verella, whom they criticize for disbursing only a fraction of the funds in his budget allocation -- again failing to satisfy deputies' local constituencies.

Comment

15. (C) The thread running through this executive-legislative confrontation is President Preval's lack of regard for the parliament, and deputies' retaliating against ministers perceived to be holding up funds for projects that tangibly benefit local constituencies. Minustah believes that a modus vivendi between President and parliament is indispensable for the realization of Preval's political program and in the interests of broader political stability in Haiti. We tend to agree. End comment.

TIGHE